

## CONSIDERING THE MISSION

### MATTHEW 10, JAMES 2

This week I worked on completing the learning guide for Chapter 8 of Radical. This learning guide was the hardest to write, because this chapter is the hardest one in the book.

After all that we have studied in this book about what the church is supposed to be and how we are to act, this chapter – Chapter 8 – calls for us to put action to our understanding or else admit that we do not truly believe the gospel message.

Universalism is the belief that God is love and, therefore, He will not allow any person to spend eternity in hell. As a result of this, God will eventually save all people by some means. As Baptists, we do not believe in universalism. We believe that only those who have confessed Christ as Lord will be reconciled to the Father and given the privilege of eternal life.

One of the points David Platt makes in his book is that people who say that they do not believe in universal salvation and then do not actively share the salvation that they claim to have received from God are “practical” universalists.

In other words, if we aren’t out there letting people know that there is no alternative pathway to the grace of God except through Jesus Christ, then we are not acting on our professed belief that Jesus is the only way to salvation. We act differently from what we say we believe, therefore, we may as well believe that there are multiple ways of getting to God.

If we say that we believe in Christ and that we are called to obey His commandments such as the Great Commission, and then we do not follow through on our beliefs with actions, then we are practical atheists.

This is what James meant when he wrote...

James 2:14 What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? 18 Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can

you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.” 19 You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. 20 How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless? 26 Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works. (NLT)

For the purpose of demonstration and to evaluate our standing before God, let’s review what we believe:

1. Is God sovereign in all things both in heaven and in the earth?
2. Did the sin of Adam bring about a separation in the relationship between God and His creation?
3. Did the sin of Adam bring about a penalty of death on all men, regardless of their goodness?
4. Is there any work that any man can do to merit the grace of God for salvation?
5. Does the blood of Christ atone for all our sin – past, present, future?
6. Was Jesus telling the truth when He said, “No man comes to the Father except by me”?
7. Are men saved by grace through faith that comes as a gift of God?
8. Does faith come by hearing the word of God?
9. Does hearing require a speaker?
10. Did Christ commission His disciples (and His church) to carry the message of the gospel to all people groups to the ends of the earth?

These things being true, then there are a couple of other questions that we must answer.

11. Will our actions always reveal what we actually believe?
12. Are we actively involved in telling others about the grace of God on a personal level?

If we answer yes to all of these questions and no the question of whether or not we are actively involved in evangelism and missions, then we are – for all intents and purposes – no different from those who do not profess Christ as Lord – we are practical pagans.

Our church is at a critical juncture in its life. Next week we will meet for our fourth family meeting – the third in this most recent series of meetings – to discuss the future of our church. You have been asked to complete a survey related to God's call on this church as preparation for that meeting.

This morning, I am going to take advantage of my position as pastor and of my obligation as your shepherd to speak to these points.

I do not want our church to be like any other church. I am not looking for us to be weird or cult-like organization. I am not calling for us to look like a first-century church which meets in caves and in secret places and acknowledges each other by secret signs.

We do not have to live in multi-family communes or wear unique clothing or speak in ecstatic languages.

The church is the body of Christ. We are His ambassadors. Jesus is not here except in the form of the Holy Spirit living in our hearts.

We are His body; therefore, we must conduct our lives as Christ conducted His life – by worshipping the Father and by sharing His love with a world that is rapidly coming to the point of moral collapse.

We cannot do any of these things if we insist on business as usual. Meeting two or three times per week on Sundays and Wednesdays and possibly one other time with a small group while never touching our community is not being a church.

Church requires going and doing and allowing Christ to live His life in and through us.

I want us to be a mobile church.

We have done “Mobile Church” three times now. Each time we have learned something new about how to make it more effective. We need to continue to think externally when we think about who we are and what we do.

I have a vision of us doing mobile church on a regular basis, not just once or twice a year. It might work something like this:

- We locate an area of the surrounding community where we feel God is leading us to work.
- We go to that place and begin contacting the people who live in the area, letting them know that we are coming.
- We host either a festival like we did in Orchard Hill or maybe a service event, such as washing cars or cutting grass. Maybe at the same time we host a backyard Bible study and feed the people who live in the neighborhood.
- We invite them to worship with us the next morning. Then we worship in their neighborhood, whether they respond or not.
- We return to the neighborhood the next week, and the next week, and so on – not with the whole church, but with a team that takes on this area as their mission project.
- The church continues to pray for this mission and that it will eventually turn in to a church plant that will reproduce itself in other areas of the city and county.
- Meanwhile, we begin planning the next mobile church event.

Another idea is that we begin hosting Sunday night worship events. With many churches canceling Sunday night worship, we could become the “Sunday night place to be.”

There may be a wider resource of musicians and singers who could lead in fantastic worship experiences, followed by preaching that goes beyond the Sunday morning routine of seeker-sensitivity and trying to rally the troops.

If attending two worship services is too much for one Sunday, then maybe, depending on the success of our efforts and the

Lord's blessing, we become a Sunday night church instead of a Sunday morning one.

If we did that, it would make more of us available for mobile church efforts in different neighborhoods.

Maybe we could turn benevolence into a mission science. If we help someone, we make every effort to get them involved in the mission by using them as a connection to their own neighborhood or environment.

Instead of going in with food or clothes or help with utilities and rent, we witness to them about the message of the gospel. Then we ask if we can use their home or their yard, even, as a staging place for reaching the community in which they live.

If we continue to realize that we cannot be limited by the size and the location of our building, we may even be able to see how we as a church can be involved in missions outside of our city.

Maybe we could go to Clarkston and minister to Iraqi refugees, or go to Haiti as a church to meet the needs of a desperate population, or maybe even go as far as Romania together to partner with and disciple a church there.

Maybe we go together to such places as Lebanon, or Uganda, or Indonesia.

The only limitation is our willingness to hear the voice of God as He directs and then our willingness to obey once we do hear from Him.

Does all of this sound easy? Have I scared you so badly that you want to find some other place where the challenge is not so great?

Or have I helped you to see the true picture of what it means to be a Christian?

The scriptural focus of Chapter 8 in *Radical* is Matthew 10.

I have wanted to preach from that chapter for a long time now, but I could never get a peace about it because it is such a challenging chapter. But maybe today is the day.

This morning, let's take a quick overview of Chapter 10 – of what it really means to be a Christian.

After empowering the disciples in verse 1, Jesus commanded them concerning the **word** and the **work** of disciples (v. 7-8).

- Preach the kingdom of heaven
- Heal the sick
- Cleanse the lepers (aids victims; drug addicts)
- Raise the dead
- Cast out demons

Then, beginning in v. 16, Jesus gave them a **warning** about what kind of reception they could expect along the way.

Matt. 10.16 Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. And beware of men...

- v. 17 be arrested, put on trial, and beaten
- v. 21, 36 betrayed by family and friends
- v. 22 hated of all men
- v. 23 persecuted
- v. 25 criticized and condemned
- v. 28 killed

Was this the recruitment speech that convinced you of the need to confess Christ as Lord? Did you realize when you joined the church that you were being recruited by the Holy Spirit to serve and possibly to die for the glory of God?

If you had understood all of this, would you still have made the same decision?

But the chapter is not all negative. Not only did Jesus give the disciples

- the **word** they were to preach
- the **work** they were to perform
- the **warning** concerning persecution

He also gave them...

- the **way** that God would provide.
- v. 9, 10 money and clothing
- v. 11, 12 housing
- v. 19, 20 words necessary to defend themselves
- v. 29, 30, 31 the Father's continued presence
- v. 41 reward

Three times Jesus told the disciples not to fear for everything was in the hands of the Father. Jesus himself would remind them of this in Matthew 28 when He said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

So let's think one more time about the questions asked in the survey you should have received.

**Who are we?** We are the body of Christ on the earth – His ambassadors to the ends of the earth.

**What makes our church great?** The only measure of greatness in the kingdom of God is how much of a servant's heart we express and demonstrate.

**What is the major strength of our church?** We are small and relatively united and in a position to do great things as a result.

**What makes us stand out from other churches in town?** We will stand out only when we make such an impact on our community that we are known for our willingness to sacrifice and to serve.

**What is our purpose?** To give God glory by our obedience of making disciples, not just of our members, but of people we haven't ever met yet.

**Who is our target audience?** Every person between here and the ends of the earth, but especially those who have never heard the name of Jesus.

**How can we connect with our target audience?** There is only one way – we must live amongst them. The Bible says, "In him (in Christ) we live and move and have our being." As His ambassadors, our mantra must be, "In them (those who have never heard of Jesus) we live and move and have our being."

**What is our message?** That God is our sovereign Creator, that Jesus Christ is His only begotten Son, and that God loved His creation so much that He gave us His Son – that there is salvation in no other name but that of Jesus of Nazareth.

John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."